

“Love, The Most Excellent Way,” Part 2 - 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 – January 10th, 2016

- Today's teaching is part two of a new series we began last week titled, “Love, The Most Excellent Way.”
 - One of the reasons we have this famous love chapter here in 1 Corinthians 13, is because it's placed between chapters 12-14.
 - More specifically, chapters 12 and 14 are about the gifts of the Spirit, whereas chapter 13 is about the fruit of the Spirit, “love.”
 - This explains why Paul goes to such great lengths to turn their attention to love as a mark of spiritual maturity, instead of gifting.
 - This because, the Corinthian Christians were behaving as if the gifts of the Holy Spirit was the gauge that measured maturity.
 - Truth be made known, it's actually the opposite that's true in the sense that gifts are given according to one lacks and or needs.
 - When one understands the “why” behind the “what” as it were, then the context of this love chapter comes into a clearer focus.
 - The gifts of the Spirit must be understood in the context of the fruit of the Holy Spirit as the most excellent way to be exercised.
 - In other words, the way we are to eagerly desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit is vis-à-vis “love,” which is the most excellent way.
 - My hope for this series is that it will provide for us a much needed paradigm shift as it relates to what love is and what love isn't.
 - Moreover, my hope is that our focus will be on the fruit of the Spirit and not so much the gifts of the Spirit as a mark of maturity.
 - Enter verses 1-3, where we see that absent this most excellent way of love, I am nothing, I have nothing, and I gain nothing.
- 1. I am nothing have nothing and gain nothing without love (Verses 1-3)**
- Paul says absent love speaking in tongues of angels, having mountain-moving faith, giving all I have to the poor gains nothing.
- 2. Everything that love is does is not and does not (Verses 4-7)**
- v4 Paul commences with a list of what love is saying love is patient love is kind it doesn't envy it doesn't boast and it's not proud.
 - v5 He continues the list saying it doesn't dishonor others, isn't self-seeking, isn't easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs.
 - v6-7 He goes on to say love doesn't delight in evil but rejoices with the truth and it always protects trusts hopes and perseveres.
 - Before we look more in depth at what Paul is saying, it is germane to our understanding to first look at what Paul is not saying.
 - Notice how that conspicuously absent from this beautiful definition of love, is any mention of love being defined as ones feeling.
 - In other words, instead of love being defined as a feeling, love is defined chiefly, as that of ones actions and of ones behavior.
 - It's for this reason that the love spoken of here is most likely personified, and it's evidenced by the series of verbs Paul uses.
 - The question becomes, who is it that this love is spoken of? Is it speaking of Christians who love or is it of Jesus Christ as love?
 - I would suggest that it's actually both, however, first and foremost it is speaking of Jesus Christ as the personification of love.
 - One need look no further than to the list we have before us here in verses 4 through 8 in order to see it's speaking of Jesus.
 - All you need to do is replace the word love with the name above all names the name of Jesus, and once you do, it fits perfectly.
 - It's interesting to note that the Apostle Paul lists seven things love is and does as well as seven things love is not and does not.
 - This begs another question of how can we obtain this love? Answer, it comes when we grow and mature becoming like Christ.
 - Better said, the more like Christ I am, the more loving I'll be. Conversely, the more unlike Christ I am the more unloving I'll be.
 - Kindly allow me to present this definition of what love is and is not through the lens of a believers Christ like maturity spiritually.
- 1. Love is patient and longsuffering – This carries with it the idea of not being more patient with those who are an irritation to us.**
- 2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV) — 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
- 2. Love is kind – One of the marks of spiritual maturity is a kind spirit such that there's just this spirit of gentleness and kindness.**
- 3. Love does not envy – One of the most destructive of all sins is the sin of envy such that it's what put Jesus Christ on the cross.**
- Matthew 27:18 (NKJV) — 18 For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.
- 4. Love does not boast – This carries with it the idea of not promoting or parading oneself so as to capture the limelight if you will.**
- 5. Love is not proud – To be puffed up in pride is the antithesis of love in the sense that it's self-focused self-love and arrogance.**
- 6. Love does not dishonor others – This has the meaning of not behaving rudely, or not speaking in a way that is condescending.**
- 7. Love is not self-seeking – This is an apt description of Jesus Who exemplified being others centered instead of self-centered.**
- 8. Love is not easily angered – This speaks of one who has a short fuse, or a hot temper and as such easily provoked to anger.**
- 9. Love keeps no record of wrongs – Oswald Chambers once said, “it's not have you been wronged, it's have you wronged.”**
- 10. Love does not delight in evil – This can be translated, as love thinks no evil such that it gives people the benefit of the doubt.**
- 11. Love rejoices in the truth – Some translations render “truth” as “good,” in that they don't rejoice when bad happens to others.**
- 12. Love bears all things -This carries with it the idea of love covers all things in the sense that love will bear and cover all sins.**
- 1 Peter 4:8 (NIV) — 8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.
- 13. Love believes all things – This does not mean we believe a lie, rather, it means that we believe the best in other Christians.**
- 14. Love hopes all things – Love will put their hope in the Lord no matter how hopeless something or someone may seem to be.**
- 15. Love endures all things – Like with hope, so too will love endure no matter how difficult something or someone seems to be.**